

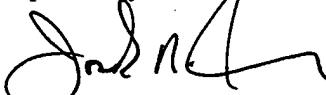
REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Upon entry of the present amendment, claims 48-50 will be pending and are allowable. Claim 48 has been amended. Claims 29-31, 41 and 50-53 have been canceled without prejudice. The support for the amendment to claim 48 is found, for example, in claim 29 as filed. No new matter has been introduced with the foregoing amendment.

Claims 48-50 correspond substantially to claims 20-22 in U.S. Patent No. 6,194,769 ("the '769 patent"). Under M.P.E.P. § 2307 and 37 C.F.R. § 1.607, Applicants hereby request that an interference be declared between the present application and unexpired patent U.S. Patent No. 6,194,769. As previously set forth in the response of March 3, 2003, each of the required elements of 37 C.F.R. § 1.607 has been satisfied. Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner declare an interference between the above-referenced patent application and the '769 patent, and furthermore, request that the handling of the present application be conducted with special dispatch.

If the Examiner believes a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of this application, please telephone the undersigned at 925-472-5000.

Respectfully submitted,



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